Parts Gateway User Guide

How To Save Money On Looking After Your Car This Winter

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About Parts Gateway

Parts Gateway save people time, money and hassle when looking for new and used car parts.

Their database of over 180 specialist dealers across the UK and Ireland will present you with incredibly competitive quotes for parts that you can easily compare, taking away the stress and complications of finding the best components for your vehicle.

Introduction To This Guide

In the colder and wetter weather, we rely on our cars more than any other time of the year – after all, who wants to be waiting at a freezing train station or bus stop to get anywhere?

As we trust our vehicles to get us from A to B, it is important that they are maintained throughout the whole season. Otherwise, the harsh weather can cause damage to them which can lead to a hefty bill for a fix.

This User Guide will offer tips and advice on looking after your car during the winter months to avoid these costs, along with solutions that will help cut the cost of any unexpected bills.

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The Importance Of Looking After Your Car

There are many reasons why it is important to keep your automobile in good shape, no matter what time of the year it is. The two main factors to consider though are the financial and safety implications.

Unexpected Costs

According to the RAC (*1), the cost of owning a car has continued to increase; due mostly to fuel costs, tax and insurance. These outgoings are begrudgingly accepted as they are expected by an owner.

If however your auto is not well maintained and something breaks, the more unexpected costs of garage labour and parts can truly break the bank.

Safety Is Paramount

It shouldn't come as a surprise that a car that is not well looked after is often a dangerous one. From faulty brakes to leaking fluids, there are many ways that crashes can be caused by neglect. In fact, Continental Tyres state that drivers are six times more likely to have an accident during the winter months (*2)

According to research carried out by Trust My Garage, 84% of motorists put themselves at risk by not checking the basic components regularly (*3). If you are not currently keeping tabs on your vehicle's condition, it's time to start.

Preparing Your Car For Winter Conditions

The drop in temperature and the higher chance of rain and snow mean that the sooner you prepare your car, the better chance it has at staying in good condition throughout the season.

It should have a full service to certify that each component is in the best condition. Here are some of the areas that should be focused on:

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Engine and Radiator

In order to keep your engine and radiator in working order, antifreeze is absolutely necessary. You need to ensure that you are using the right concentration; otherwise they will freeze and break. If they do, it can be very costly to replace them.

Parts malfunctioning can cause subtle damage to your engine or radiator which can be worsened if ignored. For example, if your heater fan is not working properly, there will be a knock on effect in the long run.

Oil is also incredibly important in order to help your engine start up on the bitterly cold mornings and to keep it well-greased. The cold makes oil thicker, and if the oil is too thick it is less effective in lubricating. Make sure that you are using the right type of oil by opting for products that are factory recommended.

Battery

Your car battery is vital throughout winter, as you will have to rely on your windscreen wipers, heater and lights.

It will generally last up to five years, but if it is more than three years old it is best to check the battery's ability to hold charge to avoid having to rely on jump starts. Use electronic testers to check the condition.

Tyres

It is highly recommended that you switch to winter tyres during this season as these have a great amount of traction for wet weather and are designed to deal much better with temperatures below 7 degrees Celsius.

It is also important to check the tread on your tyres. A tread depth gauge can be bought for as little as £5, and will allow you to monitor when your tyres need pumping or changed. A good amount of tread gives you better grip in snow, slush or rain.

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Brakes

Although your tyres go some way in providing traction when you are required to brake, you must also check that your brake calipers and pads are in working order.

Signs that the calipers should be replaced include brake fluid seepage, or if the vehicle pulls to one side when the brakes are applied. If the pads are less than a quarter of an inch thick, you will want new ones.

Lights

The winter months bring much darker days, and so making sure both your interior and exterior lights are operating properly is vital. Check that your current bulbs are all working, and have spares for when they need switching.

Lights can occasionally be dulled by dirt, snow or watermarks from rain so give them a good clean after a drive.

Windscreen

Before planning to drive anywhere, your windscreen wipers should be fully functional and clean. Test that they are working and that there is enough washer fluid to avoid blurry vision. If they are smudging and not creating a clear view, the wipers are likely worn and must be replaced.

During this season it is essential that you have a higher concentration of the solution than in the summer months, so check the instructions on your product before filling.

To get rid of ice on any of the glass panes, never use hot water as it can cause the glass to crack. The cost of fixing a crack in the glass is not worth the shorter time it takes to chuck water at the screen – always use de-icer.

Interiors and Accessories

It's a good idea to clean out your auto at the beginning of the winter season, and to install rubber all-weather floor mats to keep the floor free of dirt and avoid the carpets getting damp.

Vital accessories to keep in your car include:

- Ice scraper or brush for clearing your windshield
- Jump cables
- A torch with extra batteries
- Blanket or rug – you never know when you might break down and require the warmth
- Shovel if snow is due
- Tow rope
- Extra washer fluid and antifreeze

Replacement Parts

It's clear that to truly be ready for the bracing weather, it is essential that your car parts are in good shape - which may mean getting new ones.

These can be pricey to replace and install at the last minute, so here's a few tips to avoid the hefty bill.

Price Comparison

When it comes to any necessary expense, you want to know you're getting the best deal. The cheapest service might not be from the most reputable dealer though.

It's time to do your research and shop around – but instead of using all your time calling up dealers who might mess you around, you can use our search function which does the job for you.

Recycled

A great and cheaper alternative to new parts is recycled ones. These are also known as assembled because they are sold as an assembly of components as opposed to all the separate components you have to pay for if you buy new.

Recycled parts are sold to you as you might find them in the vehicle, which saves time and money on installation as well. What's more, if you're looking for an eco-friendly solution, this option also saves the oil that would have been used manufacturing new parts.

Money Saving DIY Maintenance

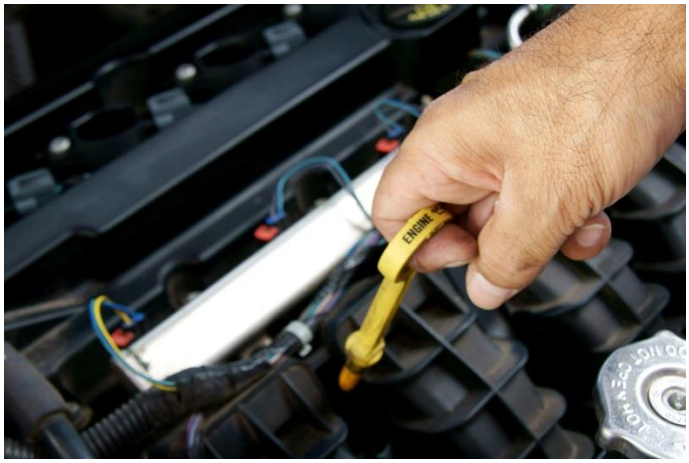
Aside from regular servicing that is required to maintain your car, there are a few bits that you need to keep an eye on yourself to avoid last minute panics and rushing to your nearest (and most likely dearest) garage.

By checking these things yourself, you can save the cost of having it done by a mechanic.

Get reading

Before making any checks, you should read up about your vehicle. Read any papers provided when you purchased it, and consider purchasing the Haynes manual or any other books for extra guides and advice.

Fluid Levels



Your owner's manual will tell you which fluids have to be tested, and how often it needs to be done.

When monitoring the levels, make sure to park your car on a flat surface with the parking brake on, and be certain that it is cooled if it has recently been driven. Next, pop open the bonnet and examine the following fluids:

Motor Oil

Find the oil dipstick by using the owner's manual and hook your finger through the loop and pull it all the way out. Use a paper towel to wipe the dipstick clean before firmly pushing it back in to the opening, as far as it well go. Then pull it back out to take the reading. Check against your manual to see if the reading indicates whether it is necessary to add more oil or not.

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Transmission Fluid

This liquid lubricates the transmission which controls the gears. You should measure the levels when the engine is running and fully warmed up for an accurate reading. This too will be read via a dipstick in the same way as your motor oil. Once again, consult your manual to ensure the levels are healthy.

The liquid should be a reddish colour if it is fresh. Although it does not need changing as frequently as oil; if it looks brown, black or burnt in any way you must refill it.

Brake Fluid

There will be a plastic reservoir that should be labelled as Brake Fluid. Most of the time you should be able to see the level line from the outside to see if it is in order, but if you cannot see it, take off the cap and look inside.

Your car should not be consuming brake fluid. If the levels are low it could indicate a leak in the break line, but in this situation it is best to speak to a professional who can let you know where the issue lies. If it runs too low, or completely runs out, the brakes will stop working.

Power Steering Fluid

This will also be in a clear plastic reservoir. You should be able to read this from the outside, and pour additional liquid in as needed. Your car may have 2 lines for checking the level, one for a hot engine and one for cold. Take the reading that reflects the current condition of the engine.

Antifreeze

This reservoir should be found near the radiator. Before confirming the levels, confirm that the engine is fully cooled so that hot water does not spurt from the reservoir as it is opened. Your manual will inform you of the levels and concentration that your antifreeze should be at.

Always read the label of the antifreeze to verify whether it should be diluted or not.

Washer Fluid

Although your car will still operate without this, you do not want to be without it when driving as it is formulated to clean off bugs and grime which can create mess on your windscreen and obstruct your view when driving.

When you top up your washer fluid, use a product that won't freeze in low temperatures.

Monitor Economical Diagnostics

Nowadays it is quite easy to monitor the diagnostics of your automobile, particularly fuel economy, using digital scanners or even smartphone apps.

Depending on the tool you choose, they can monitor a range of problems including the reasons why your check engine light is on, through to Oxygen sensor testing.

Storing Your Car During The Colder Months

When your car is not in use, it is important to make sure you are storing it properly so that it runs smoothly when you need it to.

It is best to store it in a garage, preferably with a cover to protect it from getting dirty. Let your car cool and dry before covering. If you are storing it outside, use a waterproof cover secured tightly over the vehicle in case of strong winds.

You may wish to pump up your tyres to a slightly higher air pressure if you are storing the car for some time. The pressure slowly gets lost over time, so once you take the auto back out, you may want to siphon the air slightly to get the tyres drive-ready.

By taking these steps, you will avoid the need to pay for repairs and maintenance when springtime comes round.

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Conclusion

You now know the ways that you can save some valuable cash on your car at a time when it demands the most love and care. It all comes down to knowing and monitoring its requirements, and making smart decisions over where you find the replacement parts when they are needed.

Connect With Us

Want more advice on looking after your car? Keep up to date with Parts Gateway by following us on our social media accounts.

Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/partsgateway

Twitter

https://twitter.com/PartsGateway

You can also read our blog, **PG Times**.

References & Resources

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